

## CLAIMS

1. A method for effecting transactions in an agriculture related marketplace, the method comprising:

establishing a communication network, the network defining a community of buyers  
5 and sellers of agriculture related items;

subdividing the agriculture related market place into a plurality of top-level markets,  
each top-level market defining a particular categorical hierarchy of items comprising the totality of  
the agriculture related market place;

receiving a first multiplicity of offers to sell, over the communication network, from a  
10 plurality of selling entities, each offer to sell including item transaction data organized in accordance  
with a corresponding one of the plurality of top-level markets;

receiving a second multiplicity of offers to buy, over the communication network,  
from a plurality of buying entities, each offer to buy including item transaction data organized in  
accordance with a corresponding one of the plurality of top-level markets;

15 displaying said first multiplicity of offers to sell and second multiplicity of offers to  
buy to the community of buyers and sellers over the communication network; and

executing at least one transaction between a buyer and a seller with respect to a  
particular item, by a buyer's making an electronic indication on a respective posted offer to sell for  
that particular item.

2. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of executing at least one transaction between a buyer and a seller with respect to a particular item by a seller's making an electronic indication on a respective posted offer to buy for that particular item.

5 3. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

establishing a database, the database structured in accordance with a categorical hierarchical structure, the top-level categories of the database corresponding to the top-level market subdivisions comprising the agriculture related marketplace; and

10 searching the database for offers to sell or offers to buy within a particular top-level market subdivision.

4. The method according to claim 3, further comprising:

organizing each of the top-level market subdivisions into corresponding multiplicities of item categories; and

15 searching the database for offers to sell or offers to buy within particular ones of the item categories.

5. The method according to claim 4, wherein the top-level subdivisions are ones selected from the group consisting of commodities, products, services and transportation, and wherein the item categories correspond to rational groupings of items within each such top-level subdivision.

6. The method according to claim 5, further comprising:

associating a participating entity with a corresponding one of a plurality of entity types, wherein each entity type is associated with a corresponding top-level market subdivision; and

presenting item transaction data to a participating entity in the form of a data record,  
5 the data record containing item transaction indicia specific to the participating entity's type.

7. The method according to claim 6, wherein the entity types are ones selected from the group consisting of commodity producers/brokers, product vendors, service providers and transportation contractors.

8. A method for effecting efficient electronic transactions in an agricultural marketplace, comprising:

establishing an agricultural trading platform, including a communication network linking a community of buyers and sellers of agricultural items;

establishing a database, the database structured in accordance with a categorical hierarchical structure, the top-level categories of the database corresponding to top-level market  
15 subdivisions comprising the agriculture related marketplace;

receiving a multiplicity of transaction notices from a corresponding multiplicity of participating entities over the communication network, each transaction notice including item transaction indices data organized in accordance with a corresponding one of the plurality of top-level markets;

searching the database for transaction notices in accordance with a selected category  
of the categorical hierarchical structure;

displaying transaction notices that satisfy the selected search category;

accessing selected ones of the displayed transaction notices, so as to display a detail  
5 of the corresponding item transaction indices data; and

responding to an accessed transaction notice so as to complete a transaction.

9. The method according to claim 8, the responding step further comprising:

electronically modifying at least one item transaction index by a negotiating entity;

and

10 submitting the modified transaction notice to a participating entity that originated the  
transaction notice.

10. The method according to claim 9, wherein the transaction notice is an item sale offer  
or an item buy offer.

11. The method according to claim 10, the responding step further comprising:

15 repeating the electronically modifying and submitting steps between an originating  
entity and the negotiating entity, in alternating fashion until the item transaction indices of the  
transaction notice are acceptable to both parties;

maintaining a historical record of each modification, by either party, in the database;

and

generating an electronic transaction consummation record containing final item transaction indices agreed upon by both parties.

5           12.     The method according to claim 11, further comprising the step of forwarding the transaction consummation record to a third-party financial institution, wherein the agreed item transaction indices define the transaction conditions, the satisfaction of which triggers a transfer of funds.

13.     The method according to claim 11, further comprising:

10                 organizing each of the top-level market subdivisions into corresponding multiplicities of item categories; and

               searching the database for transaction notices within particular ones of the item categories.

15           14.     The method according to claim 13, wherein the top-level subdivisions are ones selected from the group consisting of commodities, products, services and transportation, and wherein the item categories correspond to rational groupings of items within each such top-level subdivision.

15. The method according to claim 14, further comprising:

associating a participating entity with a corresponding one of a plurality of entity types, wherein each entity type is associated with a corresponding top-level market subdivision; and

wherein each participating entity generates transaction notices in the form of a data record, the data record containing item transaction indicia specific to the participating entity's type.

16. A method for effecting efficient electronic transactions in an agricultural marketplace, comprising:

establishing an agricultural trading platform, including a communication network linking a community of participating buyers and sellers of agricultural items;

establishing a database, the database structured in accordance with a categorical hierarchical structure, the top-level categories of the database corresponding to top-level market subdivisions comprising the agriculture related marketplace, the database containing a plurality of transaction offer notices for agricultural items organized in accordance with a corresponding one of the plurality of top-level markets;

establishing a set of blank transaction offer notices in the form of a data record defining a transaction's parameters, each participating entity providing appropriate transaction parameters in the data record;

receiving completed transaction offer notices and storing said notices in the database;

searching the database for transaction notices in accordance with a query  
corresponding to at least one transaction parameter;

displaying transaction notices that satisfy the selected search query;

5 accessing selected ones of the displayed transaction notices, so as to display a detail  
of the corresponding item transaction indices data; and

responding to an accessed transaction notice so as to complete a transaction.

17. The method according to claim 16, wherein the data record of the transaction offer  
notices is structured to contain transaction parameters specific to each separate one of the top-level  
market subdivisions.

10 18. The method according to claim 17, further comprising:

associating a participating entity with a corresponding one of a plurality of entity  
types, wherein each entity type is associated with a corresponding top-level market subdivision; and

presenting a participating entity with blank transaction notices containing transaction  
parameters corresponding to their entity type.

15 19. The method according to claim 18, wherein the top-level subdivisions are ones  
selected from the group consisting of commodities, products, services and transportation, and  
wherein the item categories correspond to rational groupings of items within each such top-level  
subdivision.

20. The method according to claim 19, wherein the entity types are ones selected from the group consisting of commodity producers/brokers, product vendors, service providers and transportation contractors.

21. The method according to claim 20, wherein the transaction parameters include an item location indication and the searching step comprises searching for transactions for particular items within a specified geographical radius of a search entity.

22. The method according to claim 21, wherein the transaction parameters include a top-level market indication and the searching step comprises searching for transactions for particular items within a specified top level market.

23. The method according to claim 22, wherein the transaction parameters include a top-level market indication, an item category indication and an item location indication and wherein the searching step comprises searching for transactions for particular items within a specified top level market, an item category and within a specified geographical radius of a search entity.

24. A system for effecting efficient electronic transactions in an agricultural marketplace, comprising:

an agricultural trading platform, including a communication network linking a community of participating buyers and sellers of agricultural items, the trading platform including a server system coupled to user access devices over the communication network;



a database, the database structured in accordance with a categorical hierarchical structure, the top-level categories of the database corresponding to top-level market subdivisions comprising the agriculture related marketplace, the database containing a plurality of transaction offer notices for agricultural items organized in accordance with a corresponding one of the plurality  
5 of top-level markets;

a set of blank transaction offer notices in the form of a data record defining a transaction's parameters, each participating entity providing appropriate transaction parameters in the data record;

a plurality of completed transaction offer notices stored in the database;

a search engine, hosted by the server system, the search engine searching the database for transaction notices in accordance with a query corresponding to at least one transaction  
10 parameter; and

a negotiation engine, hosted by the server system, the negotiation engine facilitating an electronic transfer of a modified transaction offer notice between an originating party and a  
15 negotiating party.

25. The system according to claim 24, further comprising:

a posting engine, the posting engine presenting blank transaction offer notices to a participating entity, the posting engine storing completed transaction offer notices in the database for access by the search engine; and

5 a management engine, coupled to the database, the management engine organizing and displaying a history of transaction notices originated by and transactions completed by a corresponding participating entity.

26. The system according to claim 25, wherein the search, negotiation, and posting engines interact with a participating entity over a set of user specific presentation screens, the presentation screens accessible by a user through a browser application.